[521]

The Breakthrough by the Queen Elisabeth Regiment at Chemin des Dames to the Marne

(May 27-30, 1918.)

by Milisch, Major in the Queen Elizabeth Regiment

After a period of training and rest at Rozoy, we find the regiment for the night of May 26-27 1918 planned by the Supreme Army Command to break through the Chemin des Dames--Berry au Bac line, prepared at Corbeny on the night in question. The site is overlooked to the north by the southern foothills of the bare plateau of the Chemin des Dames—our winter mountain. The neighbor greets us as a familiar acquaintance with his memories, which are so proud and serious for us, of the long and difficult battles in March and July 1917. May

27th, 2 a.m. At one go, the German heavy firearms fired overwhelmingly along the entire front of the attack, making a mighty spectacle in the night sky and suppressing enemy artillery counteraction and later making it almost completely silent. The surprised enemy had seen nothing of the preparations for the attack or of the assault troops being readied at night.

In the meantime the regiment had joined forces with the Füs.-Batl. right, the II. Batl. left as his front attack battalions and the I. Batl. worked closely open to the storm position.

At first dawn break 4.40 a.m. the assault waves forward, the sparsely manned front trenches are easily overrun. The defiant Hohenzollernwerk stands out in front of us, which, as a deeply structured section of the position, formed the most important target of the first section of the attack. The proven 10th Company under *Lt. d. R.* Hinze was scheduled for it. The wild, rugged forest terrain with its strong position expansion and quite unusual deep ***[522]*** wire obstacles was taken in tough one-on-one battles with the still strong nests of resistance. The 9th Company, which was on the right of the 10th Company Elisabeth, was attacked in particular by a dashing hand grenade attack by the *Utffz.* Schenkenburger on an enemy machine gun nest that allowed keeping pace with the 10th Company. The Fus.-Batl. deployed the 11th Company in the front line to reinforce it, which, together with the 9th and 10th Companies, constantly advances the attack. Deputy Officer Moeller, *Vfw.* Schreiner and *Utffz.* [[Customs officers from the 10th Company took another bravely defended base in the exemplary cooperation of their groups.

Our II. Batl.—only stopped in its advance by its own barrage of artillery fire—sees after the Fus.-Batl. the Hohenzollernwerk has taken, the Igelberg—a steeply rising mountain forest—in front of him. In restless competition, the 5th, 6th, and 7th Companies worked their way up the hill, quickly breaking any resistance. The 7th Company under *Lt. d. R.* Wiggert

reached the mountain top first, almost simultaneously with the Fus.-Batl. with it 11th Company.

The second combat zone had been overcome, the enemy infantry positions had been broken through. It was 7 a.m. when the commanded OHL signal from the Igelberg carried the good news back that the destination has been reached on the scheduled time.

The Aisne valley lay before us in sunny spring splendor. The dense stands of poplars in the distance indicated our next destination—the Aisne section. But while we were forced to stay at the Igelberg by the order to attack and in view of the position of the barrage of fire, in the exhilaration of the victories so far, we cast a look backwards and sideways to the 28th Inf. Div. taking Winterberg, whose rummaged chalk funnels shimmered pale in the morning light. A thousand memories were awakened again in us old winter mountain fighters and take on forms that stretched out to our mental eyes from the chaos of shell craters, clouds of smoke and fog. The monotonous mountain path of the Chemin-des-Dames ridge with its former sharply separated front slope position and the wide view into the country; there “the white house”, “the red mill”, the often mentioned and disputed mutual patrol targets in the foreland, there the negro village, the Willirand line, the Napoleon tunnel, the central base, the Lammert tunnel, the hillside camp, and with ours. The faithful remembrance of all the many dear comrades who died on the Winterberg unites.

After arranging the formations, Regiment Elisabeth steps in according to the order to attack at 8.30 a.m. back to. Swampy forest terrain forced one to temporarily deviate from the assigned combat zone. The opponent's resistance was no longer planned and was usually limited to the fighting of isolated groups. So the platoon of the *Vfw.* Dormann from the 5th Company to a battered battery, which defended itself with infantry and was taken by assault. A strong flank attack against the 7th Company was carried out by their flank guards, the Gren. Krauthäuser and Fahlbusch, with a light machine gun repelled with exemplary coolness at close range, the two grenadiers took 45 prisoners in addition to their brilliant route!

The Fus. Batl. [?] in its advance it encounters a ***[523]*** strong base in highly confusing swampy terrain. *Vzw. [[*Only the 11th Company with its half-platoons attacked it with hand grenades and took 28 prisoners in the process. 5 machine guns, and two trucks are his other prey. Another platoon from the 11th company under *Vfw.* Günther captured a French battery that was defending itself in close combat.

We were all magnetically drawn to the Aisne Run. We knew that by overcoming it, a great new success would be achieved. The 12th Company managed to outperform the others. The [[sergeant Hutscher’s squad, under cover of fire from its company, was the first to win the opposite bank of the Aisne in a brisk leap, followed immediately by the Staff of the Fus. Batl. (*Rittm.* v. Bodrowski, *Lt.* Freiherr v. Salmuth) and thereby also opened the Aisne bridge, 200 m west of the first crossing point. At 12.30 p.m. the II. Batl., 12.35 p.m. the Regts. Staff, 12.45 p.m. the I. Batl. the Aisne. The

crossing points were still under long-distance fire from enemy machine-gun nests. The regiment used its accompanying batteries and its own machine guns successfully against this, while the battalions on the southern bank of the Aisne reorganized their formations.

In its constant desire to move forward, the regiment had long outstripped its affiliated units; we only knew that they had not yet reached the Aisne. The regimental commander, Colonel [[Mrs. v. Hadeln, in the firm determination to continue the breakthrough to the last objective without regard to the neighboring formations, put the regiment in marching column on the road via Glennes, because at the moment there was no longer an enemy opposite us! So it was now with march security in perfect marching order into the country -- like in a field exercise -- it seemed like a dream to us!

After a strenuous march, Glennes was crossed at about 6 p.m. when reports of enemy artillery appearing on the heights south of the Vesle and the approach of tanks prompted renewed deployment. The tanks turned out to be motor vehicles, with the help of which the enemy threw his reserve at us, which nested in the quarries near Baslieux.

The Fus.-Batl. took part with the 9th Company under the active leadership of *Lt. d. R.* Bauer, supported by the 10th Company and the regimental escort battery, the stubbornly defended quarry. The II. Battalion joined in fighting to the right of the Fus.-Batl. The descent into the Vesle valley significantly facilitated the activity of the mortars, which suppress the enemy resistance groups. ***[524]***

At 7 p.m. the Fus.-Batl. with the 11th Company the Vesle, the closed I. Batl. crossed it and sends 1st and 2nd Companies to attack against the heights of Magneux, crowned by the large French airport. The enemy’s resistance intensified, but by nightfall the I. Battalion held the eastern part of the airport, where, in addition to the large halls with valuable material, eight aircraft, including six airworthy ones, were captured, while the II. Batl. via its assigned objective—La Cense-Ferme—took the western part of the airport. The 4th Company covered the right flank in the direction of Fismes and captured a loaded ammunition train with 100 wagons and the train crew ready to depart.

The memorable long day drew to a close.

The Elisabeth Regiment was at the height of its success. It fought and traversed more than 27 km, took 800 prisoners, 25 guns, 8 planes, huge amounts of ammunition and a wealth of other war material.

The darkness sets a target for the continuation of the attack. At 9 o’clock in the evening the regiment defined the position of command in the first line and the threatened flanks were protected by further echelons to the rear. In a width of 1 km it had fought for its daily goal. But the situation was quite peculiar. The bridgehead it formed over the Vesle lacked connections to neighboring units. This must be a reason for the enemy to render his nearest enemy harmless. We found the order given by the French troop command for this, it clearly proved this knowledge to us. A French

regiment and a battalion of chasseurs were scheduled for the night attack on the “détachment isolé”. Our attention and the powerful defense caused the attack attempts fail. Special recognition deserves the rejection of a strong advance against our right flank by the *Offz.* Schwarz of the 9th Company with a weak troop.

The dawn of May 28th greeted us with lively fire in front and flanks. The stubborn resistance that the enemy offered to the actions of the neighboring regiment on the left that had moved up in the meantime—the Inf.-Regt. 20[1])—opposed, a relief thrust explored and planned by the commander of the II. Batl./Elisabeth, the *Hptm.* Weinberg of the 7th Company with three groups in a bold attack with good support from the battalion’s escort battery brilliantly carried out the backbone. An advance by the 5th Company had the same effect. During the course of the morning the right-hand neighboring division also reached the Vesle and took Fismes.

The rest of the day and May 29 was dedicated to pursuing the retreating enemy.

May 30 brought the Elizabeth Regiment, excellently trained in campaign experience and the interaction with the auxiliary weapons of the mortars and escort batteries, a new brilliant success in the planned attack on the enemy who was again positioned north of the Marne to May 30, 1918 fight for the river of our destiny—the low-lying Marne—and its vineyard hills at Vincelles and Dormans.

- - - - -

[1]) Like Elizabeth, belonging to the 5th GID.

- - - - -

from: The Book of Honor of the Guard, pp. 521-524.

[524]

The Kaiser Alexander Regiment at Faverolles
in early June 1918

On the mild spring night in 1918 we moved into position. We went west and silently, as always on such occasions. Only occasionally did one bump his nose on the cookware of the man in front of him and then he would suddenly wake up from his dreams, mumbling incomprehensible sounds. “Wire!” came the rumor from time to time through the wavy line, but by then usually two or three grenadiers had stumbled over a telephone wire and were cursing the unreasonable people who had laid it. We went in single file through rolling cornfields and fragrant meadows; a picture of peace! Only now and then were we called back to reality by the fact that the French, who were not kind to us, sent his shells into the little village on our left. He had every reason to be angry, because during the last few days he had been driven far back, very far, and he had had to pay a very bloody

tribute to that little village. Many dead French were still waiting to be returned to their homeland. The little village, which had been pretty and inhabited just a few days ago, lay quiet and desolate. The residents had fled with the French military and now the village went the same way as so many others before. During the day some stalwarts had ventured in and fetched a few starving rabbits and eager cookware aspirants. To their astonishment they had seen an old mother, at least 80 years old, with snow-white hair in front of a house. It had been sitting in front of the house like a marble statue for several days, and all our people’s attempts to persuade the unfortunate woman to leave the village had failed. She seemed mad unless the grenades of her countrymen decided her sad fate sooner.

Now we came through a well-groomed forest, whose promenade paths suggested that there must be a castle nearby. We were there. One platoon remained stranded at the edge of the forest, while the other two platoons from the company occupied the actual position about 400 m ahead. Position is usually understood to mean something different from what we found here; one thinks of trench labyrinths, shelters, concrete blocks, sentry posts, etc. Here we only found individual holes in the middle of an oat field, 1.10 m wide, about 2 m long and 1.20 m deep, in each of which two men sat down at home. The next day we received more detailed information about the “Picture of Peace”, because the Frenchman had not concentrated the numerous artillery in order to spare us, on the contrary, he was very spiteful and we didn't really like that, especially since our own artillery didn't gave her business card only once. We were fired after line and thread and were glad that our holes were not too big and that we had stretched a “bombproof” tent over them, otherwise the story could have been dangerous. Unfortunately, we already had some losses in the first few days. A non-commissioned officer received a serious wound, so that I had to take over his squad. While we weren't allowed to venture out into our holes during the day, it was all the more lively at night—standing on guard, digging, fetching food, and patrolling. The latter has always not been a pleasant occupation, and especially not here because we weren't exactly sure where the Frenchman was. I took part in two patrols in this position. With. Lt. [???] We went happily from Königshütte as guides, namely the grenadiers Franz Rudolf from Woytellen i. Ostpr., who had worked in the mines in my home town before the war, Dröge from Dortmund, myself and a few other comrades whose names I have unfortunately forgotten, on patrol on the left section of the company. We left steel helmets, gas masks, rifles and belts behind, because the steel helmets got in the way when we listened, the belts with the cartridge pouches got in the way when we crawled, the rifles and gas masks rattled too easily and were also too annoying. We had only a loaded pistol in our pocket and our forage caps on.

First we walked upright, then we crouched, then we crawled through the dewy grass, and then——our minds suddenly stopped. Some distance away, not 20 m in front of us, was another patrol. We stared and stared, pistols ready, stretched as thin as we could, scarcely daring to breathe.

Should we shoot? Then we were betrayed and possibly lost. Maybe they hadn't spotted us yet, and if the French had deployed a machine gun, we'd be lost anyway. So we lay there, probably about the -- 14 days -- but it was not ten minutes. In such a situation, a minute turned into an eternity. We didn't move, our counterpart didn't move. What was to be done, we had to crawl further, carefully, the gun ready to fire, avoiding every noise, came closer and closer and finally got to the point that we recognized nothing else in the supposed patrol than nine comrades from a sister regiment who were being attacked by machine guns during the advance [[-Fire had fallen. We crawled a little farther until we saw the French holes, then crawled back just as carefully, took identification tags, weapons, and knapsacks from our dead comrades and got back safely to our company. ***[526]*** The next evening, [[Vfw. Nieder from Heddinghausen near Canstein was given the task of fetching the dead with a larger troop.

After two twenty-four hours we had to go on patrol again, this time on the company's right sector. First it went through a field of oats, upright, then bent over. After we had brushed the rope from the stalks and were wet as cats, we came to a sloping field, crawled here on all fours and finally slid on our stomachs, our uniform acquiring the English khaki color. We had orders to bring very specific news about the enemy, so we had to get as close as possible, that is, farther and farther. So far everything has been going well. There! Weren't there French outposts? Too late! We had already been seen. Damn… some flares went up, one, two white, then three, four red – – ! Quickly into the furrow that offers some protection and a storm broke out that I will never forget. The enemy artillery was barrage and we were between the French position and the barrage zone. Have fun! There we lay with our talent and didn't know how to use it. For the time being, going back was out of the question, for the impacts came so often and were so close together that going back would have been suicide. In addition, the French infantry was on guard, doubtless suspecting a German attack, and firing off flare after flare whose trembling light would have been fatal to us. The shell fragments flew around our ears, so that we had to think of our steel helmets lying in our holes with our very own feelings. The French artillerymen did their job, which was so extremely unpleasant for us, so well that it still surprises me today that none of us got anything. Flares kept going off, mixed in with the barking of the machine guns. It was to run away —if only it were possible. Eventually the artillery fire seemed to die down and new hope revived us. But first it turned out differently, and second, than you think. For a change, the Frenchman now fired gas grenades. But nothing was to be spared us that night! The dull bursting of these dangerous things was uncanny. Luckily, the gas mist went over to our comrades, and they had gas masks. It was on such occasions that one really learned to appreciate the value of a steel helmet and a gas mask. The thrice cursed impacts were so frighteningly close to us that we couldn't make ourselves slim enough. We tried to dig deeper with our hands, but that didn't achieve much either. We had nothing left for gas grenade splinters

and did not even wish for a home shot from it, because these splinters were supposed to cause deadly blood poisoning in very many cases. What one had to go through in moments like this was hard to grasp and only someone who has once found himself in such a difficult situation can appreciate it.

Just as everything on earth is transient, so was the bombardment that night, the firing died down. Suddenly one of my comrades jumped up and ran back -- we followed behind. Although we went stooped, it was still a very frivolous undertaking, for we should have taken decidedly more consideration of the proximity of the enemy in our lower legs. But once again we relied on our lucky stars and on the fact that the Frenchman now felt safe again after such a bombardment. We ran as if the devil were on our heels and so missed the call from our outposts. Only at the last moment were we recognized by them. We almost got shot by our own machine guns for not answering the call. Despite the heavy shelling, our men were on guard. An enemy attack could very easily have followed even after such fire, so we were lucky that our machine gunners had stayed calm and cool and didn't just bang on. Otherwise we would have ended up on the casualty list after all, and we weren't that ambitious.

Arrived in our holes, the steel helmet, so cursed on the marches, was immediately put on, the gas mask pot slung over our shoulders, and then we began to receive provisions for the slowly dawning new day. [[lost our appetite after what has happened, let him be told that he is have greatly mistaken. Diagnosis was still: appetite good, otherwise tired.

The sun was pleasantly warm the next afternoon. You could tell it was summer. The larks soared into the sky in jubilation. Again we were doomed to lie idle in our holes. You weren’t even allowed to smoke a cigarette, because then the enemy artillery would have smoked us out. Then we heard the loud roar of bursting shrapnel and ghostly little white clouds and rings from the blue ether. Enemy planes circled. Tack-tack-tack, German planes were already attacking and now the hammering started. A magnificent spectacle was offered to us, free of charge and postage paid! The anti-aircraft guns had ceased their activity. The great silver birds gleamed exceedingly beautifully in the bright sunshine. A demonstration flight at an airfield couldn't be nicer. The French planes, with their singing engines, could be heard clearly above the noise. There! A German plane seemed hit! It separated from the rest and came lower and lower, finally landing in gliding flight near our regimental headquarters. Strange that at that moment I had to think of my best friend, who had been with the aviators for a long time. I could have walked to the plane! – – Eight days later my friend confirmed my suspicions. It was he who had to go down there and had suffered nothing but a few scratches on his Westphalian skull. But a few months later fate overtook him. He was shot down behind enemy lines and met an early death. His brave brother, also a very young volunteer, died shortly afterwards on the western front with the Guards artillery.

The dogfight was taking place directly above us when suddenly our platoon leader, Lt. L. Fröhlich called a paramedic, who immediately crawled

over with his first-aid kit and the inevitable canteen, the much-coveted contents of which he always had to guard with particular care. A machine gun shell from an airplane injured the officer in both arms and legs. That our lieutenant could be so careless! Nowhere was one's life safe anymore, not even under the “bombproof” canvas.

Shortly thereafter we were relieved.

Erich Weisehahn,

Private with the 7th Company, Kaiser Alexander
Guards Grenadier Regiment No. 1.

- - - - -

from: The Book of Honor of the Guard, pp. 524-527.

[544]

Guards Pioneers at the Marne

by Lt. v. Bülow, 5th Guards Pioneer Company[1])

It was a peculiar feeling when, on the morning of July 7, I saw the world-historical Marne for the first time from the northern heights opposite Dormans. Embedded in vineyards, it lay before us in glorious sunshine. Again it was to become Germany’s destiny, because again we thought of Paris. True, I suspected the difficult struggle, but not as the beginning of decline, but as the last step to victory.

The 1st Guards-Inf.-Div. should attack as a division primarily within the 7th Army. In our attack sector, a Bavarian division was positioned as a “position division” in primitive quarters on the northern bank of the Marne in the Forêt des Ris. In the southern foothills of this forest, on the edge of the hill, field guards stood as immediate security with a wide view of the enemy terrain. On the banks of the Marne itself there were only very weak outposts during the day, which were slightly strengthened at night. There were no trenches, nor were there any wire obstacles or bulletproof shelters.

Since during the attack we had to cross a fairly wide river surrounded by steep banks, the main requirement for the success of the attack was that the pontoons for crossing should be prepared as close as possible to the river and unnoticed by the enemy. For this reason, the pontoons were driven up to the southernmost foothills of the forest during the last few nights, brought up to about 300 m from the river on the night before the attack, and placed in vineyards there, protected from view. The terrain was extremely unfavorable, since the steep slope to the water for a distance of two kilometers lay unprotected from enemy eyes. The wind was also against the enemy. On the morning of the day of the attack, shortly after the start of our barrage, the army engineer battalion that had to carry out the crossing, together with us division engineers and the infantry, were to move the

pontoons to the Marne and first a battalion of the 4th Guards - [[Translate [[regts. This had orders to capture the giant village of Dormans. Then the action of the 1st and 2nd Guards Regiments, which had started in the meantime, to join and with these two ***[545]*** take the embankment directly south of the village. Here was the division's starting position for the assault! The units should then organize themselves and proceed as daylight sets in: the 1st Guards Regiment right and the 2nd Guard Regiment left. The 4th Guards Regiment should remain behind the centre as a reserve. My company was with the 2nd Guards Regiment allocated for the expected woodland fighting south of Comblizy. The Army-Pioneer-Battalion should have completed two bridges (to the east and west of the village) by daybreak [?] so that the artillery and baggage transports could follow.

The day of the attack drew near. The infantry arrived and were briefed by us. Pontoon wagons pulled up. The artillery ammunition was munitioned at night and, since these were no longer sufficient, also during the day. There was such a hustle and bustle in our forest that it seemed a miracle to us that the enemy fire, which was now beginning to break in more often, didn't cause any more damage. But enough stacks of ammunition were still blown up during the night to give the enemy a clear picture of our intentions. Despite all of these adverse circumstances, and although we were very often driven up from our bivouac at night by the nearby shelling, the mood was good the company well. Admittedly, opinions were expressed that doubted the good outcome for the company, although there were people who took the flu as a reason not to come back from the hospital -- but, "take everything only in general", the main part was good. I remember many comrades who, despite violent attacks of influenza (and most of the division was more or less ill), did not leave the company so as not to have to be seen as a shirker.

Despite all of the difficulties, the preparations were completed shortly before the attack. On July 14, at 6:00 p.m., I assigned the company to the following day. The main crowd was in impeccable condition.

July 15, 1:00 a.m. [[S. Artillery fire began. Everything jumped up. With the first impacts in our vicinity, we suddenly realized: the enemy was firing!

At 1.10 a.m. S. Finally our artillery is deployed as ordered. An [[alp departed from us.—In the deep darkness, running and hastening in the tangle of vineyards. Orders, shouts, grenades. A hopeless confusion while carrying the pontoons to the river. Many pontoons took hits.—Shooting down the thousand built-in mortars on Dormans. A thousand hundredweight mines are supposed to wear down the enemy located there. A chatter as if a giant flock of ducks were flying overhead. A moment of dead silence. Then a crash and thunder, in the flashes of which the village lies before us lit up as bright as day. Crossing in complete darkness in the enemy barrage. The battalion of the 4th Guards Regt., half of which was led by Lt. Wagner (Rudolf) from the Guards Pioneer Battalion, captures Dormans in house fighting. After a short time the two crossing points on the left are out of action. All sunk. One of the two stations on the right maintains the service.

—In the uncertain twilight, the bridge [[trains rushed down the steep heights and galloped up at the planned bridge points on the Marne. In the raging barrage many teams were left stranded. That was a deed, you Landwehr-men, the [[Trains!—I wanted to relieve the shot-up remnants of the engineer battalion with my company in order to build the bridge east of Dorman. It is scarcely possible for an individual to get close to the river under the strongest enemy artillery and machine gun fire, and at the moment it is impossible for the whole bridge-building company. Also, almost all the pontoons had been shot up, and we cannot lose any time, since we have other tasks. The whole valley is under enemy Yellow Cross fire. Gas masks out!

When it grew light, everyone crowded together at the bridge west of Dorman, which the brave pioneers had still completed. It was under heavy enemy fire—the first enemy bombers appear. Bombs are falling on the bridge, on the troops who were jammed, bombs everywhere. The general of the engineers of the 7th army, Major General Unverzagt, his adjutant and the commander of the engineer battalion, *Hptm.* Stille, were killed. A soldier’s death spares no rank.—The first enemy Ifl. (Infantry pilot) shot at the bridge with machine guns; he was shot down and sank in the Marne.—The attack advanced only slowly. The losses during the crossing were great. The formations were confused and the artillery followed only weakly on the only bridge. But at about 11.00 a.m. we reached Comblizy.—An enemy captive balloon close in front of us was shot down. A shot-up French field kitchen strengthened us with cold “bean coffee”. Behind us we hear the barrage of bombs from large enemy aircraft.

At 4.00 p.m. [[p. we were still ahead of Comblizy. Our artillery that had come across was not enough to drive off the solid enemy.

Late afternoon. Company on the way back to Dormans. “Maintain bridge construction and crossings.” I didn't think there was anyone who wasn't terrified as I read this command that called us back to hell. A new attack that was ordered immediately after this following vigorous artillery preparation made no progress. So back to Dormans. Late in the evening accommodations in the musty cellars at the east exit of the village. The extraordinarily efficient [[Sergeant Bressin manned the bridge as a guard with two groups of engineers. The commander of the engineer battalion had built it with superhuman effort with the rest of his company, gathering [[foreign engineers, infantry, artillerymen and train crews in the course of the day. Truly a brilliant achievement! Later, exhausted, everyone sinks to bed. The captured alcohol gave our overwrought nerves a brief rest...

The following days showed, even for us old soldiers at the front, an unprecedented high level of shooting. The company took over the stretch of the Marne from the center of Dormans to just west of the village. Here we built footbridges from recovered barrels and boards and repaired the bridge day by day. We were seen from the front and side, from the direction of Château Thierry. The enemy saw everything we did and shot at us. Again and again his big planes hovered over us. The “Bülow Bridge” and the

footbridges were damaged several times a day, and with each job we waited anxiously for the next bomb drop by the enemy squadrons. Do you know what it means when hundreds of enemy planes are cavorting in the air above you and their [[balls put down as barrage? One becomes so “small and ugly” when the splinters hiss around one and there is an outcry and there is another good German less. Nerves were strained to the point of bursting, the cigarette in the corner of the mouth, everyone stared around with glassy eyes. And here people are running around in fear, taking cover from the blessings of hell. Then the right leader gathered all his strength and—despite the fear in his heart—he was a hero. Only his example brought salvation in such mad moments. One of the many non-commissioned officers, one of the few officers, was “the” leader, of whom nobody spoke later, who didn't want to be thanked for it.

For those of us who participated in the Marne attack the words “hell” and “Marne” will be [[pronunciated forever. What we experienced in those relatively few days one cannot truly describe. But who is able to interpret the words hell, insanity, chaos, terror, and inhuman [nervous tension], he can get a little picture for himself... In our desolate cellars we lay ready, after the bridge watch reported renewed damage, to complete the crossings to repair again. Every time it cost me renewed courage to rush out with my men, because there were always new losses and the repairs only lasted for a short time. But it was important because the comrades at the front should not go [[hungry, and making a good example was always helpful even when the situation was on the verge of collapse. Every man performed his duty since the [band] formed by [comradeship] and iron discipline [held strong].

And so the work continued until the evening of July 18 when we received the following order: "Withdrawal across the Marne will take place during the night of July 19/20!"

We all breathed a sigh of relief, for even the strong soon got on their nerves. From the remains of the bridge trains that were shot up on July 15, we built footbridge after footbridge. During the night of the 19th most of the artillery and parts of the infantry withdrew behind the Marne. On July 20 at about 5.00 hours the 2nd Batt., 2nd Guard Regt. under the command of Capt. v. [[Austria was the last unit to cross the river. Under the cover of a smokescreen we pioneers used hand grenades to destroy the last crossings The glorious sunrise that day illuminated the Marne valley shrouded in dense artificial fog. Everywhere the eye could see the retreat was carried out calmly. And when this sad work was done at around 6 a.m., I was the last to leave the Marne shortly afterwards. No enemy fire disturbed us. The enemy was preparing an attack themselves and thought we were in the old positions. Only later did barrage fire on the deserted trenches.

After a few days we withdrew (in stages) toward the Vesle. The situation in the “Marne-tip” had become unbearable as a result of the pressure exerted by Foch’s offensive from the west.

It was the first retreat that the 5th Guard Pioneer Company had to (perform).

[1]) With friendly permission of the publisher Otto Riebicke taken from the work “Our Pioneers in the World War”.

[The Honor Book of the Guard, pp. 544-546]

[549]

The Elisabeth Regiment in the Battle of the Argonne September 26 to October 9, 1918.

According to the reports of the then Regt.-Adj. HO v. RL

On September 18, 1918, the Elizabeth Regiment was relieved in the Siegfried Position west of Pinon, which had been held in hand-to-hand combat for days against freshly deployed infantry divisions.

Rail transport took it to St. Juvin near Grandpré at the northern foot of the Argonne on the night of September 19/20. The towns of Fléville, Cornay and Chatel are assigned to us as quarters. The position, which stretched across the Argonne, in front of Varennes further over the Vauquois and Avocourt, seemed calm at the moment, but even the heaviest artillery that had landed seemed suspicious to us. On a calm front, these were not needed. But we still hoped for a few weeks of relative calm, since the regiment had been badly [[hit by the last few weeks of hard fighting. Instead of the commander on leave, Major v. Plehve of the 3rd Guards Regt. of Foot the regiment since September 1.

Initially, however, there was neither much rest for the officers nor the troops. The fourth companies of the battalions are disbanded in order to reestablish strong units again, the flood of papers to be processed swelled from day to day, the position of the 1st Guards-Inf.-Div. in front of Cheppy [???] to be reconnoitered so that the regiment could be pushed in there at any time, a measure which indicated that the higher command expected attacks. It was therefore eagerly explored, whereby it turned out, to our great astonishment, that the rear positions were not developed at all, but that the front line there also left much to be desired.

But this time, too, things turned out differently than expected and much worse than we [[expected. We all had a certain feeling that there would soon be “thick air” here, but the air got a little too thick. On September 24, the leadership announced that a strong American-French attack on the Reims-Verdun front was to be expected. Instead of being deployed with the 1st Guards-Inf.-Div., the regiment was ordered to position itself behind the 4th Guards Regt. of Foot in the Nolte camp on the eastern slope of the Argonne, west of Montblainville, as an intervention regiment. The 25th passed without any special events. The combat strength was still about 200 men per battalion. Liaison with the 4th Guards Regt. was included, as well as with the Württemberg Landw.-Inf.-Regt. 125. Any

overview in the dense undergrowth of the Argonne Forest could be gained at all. It meant waiting to see what will come.

And the next morning it started. Heaviest barrages broke out all along the front. The regiment's staging areas were also under fire, and the combat vehicles suffered casualties. Nothing could be seen, especially since there was still thick fog in the morning hours. At 10:25 a.m. the Regts.-Staff received a report that Varennes had been taken. At 11.15 a.m. the 4th Guards Regiment reported that it had to move back to Montblainville. This meant, however, that the Elizabeth Regiment had to fulfill its task and must intervene. While the F. Batl. following the Landw.-Inf.-Regt. 125 occupied Hill 195, the II. Batl. ordered to interpose between Hill 195 and Montblainville and to stop the enemy at all costs. By 12 noon the enemy had already reached the Forge Ferme just south of Montblainville. Any connection backwards failed, since the higher rods were 6-8 km further back. The regiment was therefore entirely dependent on its own decisions. At 1:30 a.m. a messenger arrived with the order to stop the enemy.

Since the regimental staff could not get an overview in the dense forest area, it was decided to move the command post back to Mudra heights for the night. During the afternoon the Americans advanced mainly on the east bank of the Aire. Tanks were reported to be approaching. The Argonne itself had not yet been attacked.

Towards evening the 4th Guards Regiment assembled at Apremont, while the Elisabeth Regiment with F.- and II. Batls. blocked the wide gap between Bouzonberg and Aire. The I. Batl. initially remained as a shock reserve in the Nolte camp. At 10 o'clock in the evening on the orders of the 1st Guards-Inf.-Div. left of II. Batl. deployed with the front to the east to cover the left flank of the Argonne position as far as Baulny, which was already in the enemy's possession by the evening, a sign that the 1st Guards-Inf.-Div. must have been completely overrun[1]). The situation therefore required the regiment to defend an almost 5 km wide front to the south and east. In view of this situation, one wondered with concern what the next day would bring.

The night passed fairly quietly. The F. Batl. was detached and dragged to the foot of the Mudra heights. The I. Batl. was by three companies of the Landw.-Inf.-Regts. 122 reinforced. It was also possible to get the division from an earlier command post

- - - - -

[1]) The former commander-in-chief of Army Group Kronprinz dedicated the following words to Major General Prince Eitel Friedrich of Prussia in his memoirs: “On September 28—(1918)—I visited my brother Fritz, who was in a heavy fight with the Americans with his First Guard Division on the eastern edge of the Argonne. I knew my brother to be a very brave, undaunted, and sober man who was exemplary in caring for his troops. He was used to grief and misery, for the First Guards Division had pretty much always stood where the air was thickest: Ypres, Champagne, Somme, Chemin des Dames, Gorlice, Argonne. This time I found him changed; filled

with immeasurable bitterness, he saw the end approaching, against which he and his people were desperately fighting. He gave me an account of the situation that shook me deeply. His whole division still consisted of five hundred rifles on the battle front—the staffs with their messengers fought in the front line, rifle in hand...." ***[551]***

to establish a telephone connection. The completely unclear situation put us in a personal feeling of tension. One wished for the day and was glad again that the night brought some rest. A large medical shelter at the foot of the Mudra heights was evacuated during the night, so that the regimental staff found a place to stay here, at the same time with better opportunities for communication with the troops and to the rear.

At dawn, the Americans attacked again. Supported by numerous fast-moving tanks, he tried to advance between Aire and the Argonne. But the II. Batl. clung to the terrain in a most adept manner. Even the tanks could not penetrate the undergrowth. Several of them are incapacitated with hand grenades. Again and again the opponent was thrown back in the counterattack. The 6th and 7th Companies stood out in particular.

The enemy directed particularly violent attacks against Montblainville. The entire development of the battle can be seen from the Mudra heigts as on the parade ground. But immediately the F.-Batl. scheduled to counterattack. It could be clearly observed how the counterattack caused the Americans, who had advanced through Montblainville, to retreat. Old positions and barricades gave the F. Battalion, supported by two companies of the 122nd Regiment, the opportunity to stop at least one more advance by the enemy, even if Montblainville could no longer be recaptured.

Now the Americans launched a new tank attack, which was repelled. A tank was destroyed again.

A huge battle painting can be seen from the Regiment’s command post. From the Mudra heights one could see almost the entire heavily undulating plain up to Montfoucon. Everywhere the Americans were advancing, everywhere the German troops threw themselves at them with heroism, but the infantry was powerless against the tanks, again and again one could see how the tanks broke into the lines and rolled them up. At a great distance behind, the French and Americans followed to occupy the area cleared of the tanks. From the south one could see dense columns moving forward, cavalry advancing, artillery galloping up, reserve tanks, suddenly the picture of a large-scale breakthrough, which had something overwhelming when one silently compared one’s own weak forces with it. But no matter how strong the enemy, we could still fight and hold him off until the higher command had time to bring in reserves.

During the course of September 27, the Americans attacked the thin front of the Elisabeth Regiment six times. At the front of the II. Batl. stood the dashing Infantry Gun Battery 25. Standing in the forefront, it engaged the attacking tanks with direct fire. From the dense undergrowth, machine

gun fire repeatedly hit the tanks and the following enemy infantry, often at very close range, and all attacks were successfully repulsed, with the enemy suffering the heaviest casualties. At the same time as these battles were being fought, the regimental staff was anxiously watching the progress of the enemy on the opposite bank of the Aire. Towards evening the Aire bridges near Apremont were already in the hands of the Americans, and there was extreme danger that the regiment would be caught in the rear, for there were no reserves given the enormous extent that its front [552] has reached through the development of the fighting more available.

During the evening hours the regiment received orders by telephone from the division to go back across the Aire at Apremont in order to meet a counterattack by the 4th Guards Regiment in the morning hours. to support against Baulny. The fact that this order could not be carried out was only recognized by the division after a lengthy discussion, and instead the order was given that the Elisabeth Regiment should move via Chatel to its designated staging area. This task necessitated a withdrawal of battalions engaged in combat, a night march on footpaths through the [[jungle of the Argonne and a renewed deployment near Apremont on the opposite bank of the Aire.—The necessary orders were issued. The I. Batl. should initially remain on the west bank, front to the east, in order to be able to flank and support the counterattack the next morning. The relief by the Württembergers during the night was only incomplete, but the regiment could not take this into account if it wanted to reach the new staging area in time.

With fairly lively [[jamming fire, which was doubly unpleasant in the forest, the II.

At about 7 a.m. the two battalions, proceeding via Chatel, Chéhéry, and Le Granges, connected up with the 4th Guards Regiment in the Esperance-Ferme area, on either side of the Varennes road. Apremont was now in front of the right wing of the regiment, and it was found out that it was already heavily occupied by the Americans, who were already in the rear of the 1st Battalion [[stand, which in turn still stood between Montblainville and Apremont.

In the morning it turned out that the I. Batl. was without connection to the left or right and that an American attack in its rear was already developing. In this situation, the skilful leadership of the battalion succeeded. [[Cmdrs., Hptm. Liesmann, to take back the right wing and, instead of facing the east, to face the enemy with the front to the south. Throughout the day the battalion repelled all enemy attacks in an exemplary manner. The company leader of the 3rd Company, Lt. Pahl, finished off a tank with a concentrated charge. Tanks kept breaking through the battalion’s thin line. But if the Americans then go ahead behind them, they were met with heavy fire from the battalion, whose machine gun nests were scattered throughout the terrain. At 6 p.m. the Americans finally tried to surround the battalion. With only 98 rifles left, the battalion then retreated to Apremont, following the lines of the Argonne. The machine guns, which

were quickly put back into position, inflicted the heaviest losses on the enemy pushing in masses, two tanks were knocked out and three more were forced to turn back. By the time darkness fell, the battalion had used up its last bullets. At 10 p.m. it assembled at the north exit of Chatel. It remained subordinated to the Würrtembergers.

It had been quiet on the east bank of the Air that day.

September 29 passed with partial attacks being repulsed. An attack in the direction of Exermont initially threatened the regiment's left flank, but a counterattack by Inf.-Regt. 111 [?] the Americans back again.

In the morning hours of September 30 F.- and II. Batl. were ready to counterattack. The I. Batl. moved into II.'s position. At 6 a.m. our own preparatory fire began, at 8 a.m. the II. Batl. reached the southwest corner of Montrebeau, the Americans suffered the heaviest casualties, although the battalion's combat strength was only about 90 men. The Montrebeau was controlled by Inf.-Rgt. 111 [[stormed. The F. Batl. could not join the attack due to flanking from Apremont.

A battalion from Inf.-Rgt. 20 was subordinated to the regiment and replaced the II. Batl. which moved as a regimental reserve to Chéhéry during the night.

The next two days remained calm, only the I. Batl. had skirmishes with enemy patrols breaking through on the west bank of the Aire.

At midnight on October 4, an extremely heavy fire began on the whole front. The entire area was gassed at great depths with gas and smoke grenades. At 5 a.m. the actual preparatory fire commenced with even greater force. Observation was impossible due to the dense clouds of gas and fog ***[553]***. At 7 a.m. the Americans attacked. He overran the the thin front line. Remnants of the Fusilier Battalion initially held out at Les Granges. The regimantal command post in a ravine south of Fléville was also completely gassed. With all the forces still available, the regiment occupied the line Chéhery mill — Chéhéry — northern edge of the Gottberg Gorge. With tanks, the American advanced out of the fog against this line. Infantry guns shot up some. At 10 a.m. ten tanks [[grabbed the remains of the F.-Batl. at Les Granges and force them to go back to Chéhéry. A counterattack by the 6th Company and fire by the First Battalion stopped the attack. The situation was becoming increasingly desperate. In the direction of Exermont, the enemy gained more and more ground. Firing tanks were roaming all over the area, one even knocking down a firing escort gun. Our own artillery was gassed and shot up, a unified command of the battle was no longer possible.

At 4 p.m. the regiment was finally forced, along with the Inf.-Regt. 20, to clear the heights south of Fléville that had been held until then and attempted to re-establish themselves on the terrain north of Fléville. Here it received heavy artillery fire, since it was positioned on the sloping [[slope of the heights and could thus be easily observed by the enemy.

The I. Batl. had escaped capture at the last moment by crossing the Aire. It rejoined the regiment north of Fléville. The whole situation had not

been clarified at all and appeared to be extremely critical, since there was nothing more to oppose further energetic action by the Americans. Somewhere in the area, the regiment's commander managed to find a telephone shelter and to report to the division. The division then ordered the line to be held at all costs, since a counterattack by the 150th and 151st Regiments was already planned. The Americans did not seem to be aware of the extent of their success, in any case they did not dare to go any farther and thereby miss another opportunity in their favor; for during the night it was possible to create a new resistance line.

At dawn, the Elisabeth Regiment assembled at Sommerance, still 100 rifles strong.

Regiment Plehwe was formed from the remnants of the division, one battalion of 100 men from each regiment. Instead of the expected detachment, this regiment was deployed again on October 6, once more in the Argonne to support the Württembergers. On October 6, Regiment Plehwe was again ready in the Argonne Forest, just west of Chatel. Any reconnaissance was not possible, so the regiment could no longer intervene in the battle for Chatel. In order not to be simply cut off in the wooded area, the regiment retreated independently in the midst of heavy enemy fire on the narrow footpaths and attempted to intervene in the fight again from the Humbserberg north of Chatel. Company Pahl, the remainder of the Elisabeth Regiment, took the Schloßberg from Chatel in a dashing counterattack in the evening hours, but was thrown back again in the morning hours of October 8. In conjunction with the Landw.-Inf.-Regt. 125 Regiment Plehwe now defended the Humbserberg in back and forth fighting. It was also possible to hold him, although the forest battle sometimes had to be fought at a few paces from the completely exhausted troops.

During the night the remnants of the Regiment Plehwe gather in the Wumba Gorge. It actually ***[554]*** fought to the last man, for not even one company appeared altogether at the rallying point.

During October 9 the remnants of Regiment Plehwe reached the division which was already marching off in the direction of Stenay.

The Elizabeth Regiment, which had only recently survived the heavy fighting at Pinon, could look back with justifiable pride upon achievements that were worthy of the highest praise and could be compared to the achievements of 1914. Yes they, as far as the moral requirements are concerned, far surpassed.

- - - - -

Source: *The Book of Honor of the Guard* (Part 2), pp. 549 - 554.

[554]

The 2nd Foot Guards Regiment near Vouziers

October, 19 - 27 1918

by Major Dietrich Frhr. v. Schleinitz

The regiment had been through weeks of heavy fighting when it moved to billets in Chagny. The place was heavily occupied by troops. The people could only be housed in makeshift barracks. Losses had been so high during the last few weeks, and replacements so few, that the division's three infantry regiments could only field one combat battalion each. The 2nd Foot Guards Regt. formed the Combat Battalion Schleinitz, which was made up as follows:

Staff: Commander *Hptm.* Dietrich Frhr. v. Schleinitz, Adjutant *Lt. d. R.* Schlumberger; 1st Comp. *Lt. d. R.* Franke; 2nd Comp. *Lt. d. R.* Tamkus; 3rd Comp. *Lt. d. R.* Schütz; MG Comp. Lt. d. R. Luther, T.-M.-Det. *Lt. d. R.* Müller. Combat strengths: 1st Company 3 officers, 97 men, 7 light machine guns; 2nd Company 3 officers, 82 men, 3 light machine guns; 3rd Company 3 officers, 77 men, 4 light machine guns; MG Comp. 2 officers, 30 men, 7 heavy MG; T.-M.-Det. 1 officer, 21 men, 3 mortars.

After only three days of rest, on October 19 at 2 p.m., the order that the division’s three combat battalions should be brought forward as an intervention force and assembled into a regiment under the command of Major Graf zu Eulenburg (commander of the 1st Guards Regiment). At 3.10 p.m. Schleinitz’s battalion marched off from Chagny. After a strenuous march via Louvergny—le Chesne—Belleville sur Bar—Boult aux Bois, the battalion reached the [[crown prince camp in the Forêt de Boult (a barracks camp prepared by German troops) at 12.45 at night in pouring rain. Soaked to the skin, we slept in the barracks where, during the night, the battalions of the 1st and 4th Guards Regiments arrived.

On October 20, at 11:50 a.m., the regiment received orders to deploy in the hollow 1500 m west of La Croix. We just had time to hand out food. At 12.30 p.m. the battalions marched independently in this order: 1st, 2nd, 4th Regiments, according to the assigned staging area. Following the path of the 1st Regiment *(Hauptmann* von Schauroth), we advanced about 300 m along the road (sequence: 1st, 2nd, 3rd MG Comp., TM Det.) over the western edge of the Bois de la Croix. We thought we were still outside the range of enemy fire. The staff was riding at the front of the battalion when two heavy direct hits struck the road behind it at the front of the Franke’s company. The company lost 12 dead, 7 wounded, the battalion’s staff, 3 wounded of the [[N.-A[.] We marched to the edge of the forest 400 m north of the road. The marching column was abandoned. Using [[loopholes, clumps of trees, and wooded areas as cover, we moved to our staging area. Skirting the village of la Croix aux Bois to the north, we arrived there at 2.30 p.m. Also today, like the following days, it rained heavily. No one had a dry thread about him anymore. ***[555]***

In the late afternoon the order came from the regiment that the first attack intended for the afternoon of October 20 on the Aisne heights east of Vouziers, where the enemy had gained ground, advancing over the crest, was to take place on the morning of October 21. The battalion spent the

night at the staging area, a piece of forest where we pitched tents. When the rain stopped in the evening and a moonlit night illuminated the Aisne heights, I went forward with the company officers to reconnoiter the initial position of the assault and to indicate to the companies the objective and limits of the attack on the spot. The night was light enough to orientate oneself and to get an impression of the wonderful hill country covered with rich deciduous forest. Directly west of Chamiot Ferme we found the staff of the battalion deployed there in a tunnel. Troops and command seemed severely exhausted by the constant attacks. In the front line, insofar as it was still occupied at all, was quite a jumble of troops. Little could be learned about the enemy either, so we launched the attack on the basis of the orders we had received and our own observations. The flares that flashed up from time to time all along the Aisne front should give us the approximate front. After returning from reconnaissance we still had a brief time to rest and to make the necessary preparations for the battalion's departure.

On October 21, at 4:30 a.m., the battalion marched via Hobette-Ferme — Chaimont-Ferme to the starting position for the assault. The moon had set and thick clouds hung in the sky. We were lucky, because thanks to the darkness, we managed to reach the starting position for the assault without being fired upon. At 6:50 a.m. this was taken and reported to the regiment.

The following had been deployed: Schütz's company in the front line on the right, Tamkus' company on the left. Franke's company was in reserve with the battalion headquarters, whose command post was on the steep slope, 300 m west of the Chaimot-Ferme, in the trench of an old training facility in the starting position for the assault. A platoon of heavy machine guns was assigned to each company in the front line. The rest was in reserve at the [[KTK. The three light trench mortars also took up position on the steep slope at the [[KTK, firing in the direction of the wooded area (maze) in front of Tamkus' company.

Even though we weren't fired upon by the French when we moved into readiness, he must have noticed movement and noise, because it was hardly over when at 6.40 a.m. heavy enemy machine gun fire.

Finally at 7:40 a.m. our artillery preparation began. The task was not easy for the artillery, since the mutual front lines were very close to each other. The gun barrels were badly worn out and could not be replaced. Also, the time for [[enemy reconnaissance had been too short to establish the enemy line accurately. There were shots falling short by more than 300 m, so that not only the front line was endangered and worried. Franke's company suffered heavy losses (8 dead, 7 wounded) as a result of direct hits from our own artillery. As a result, the company had sunk to half its original combat strength before the actual attack began.

At 7.55 a.m., punctually at the appointed time, the front line began to charge. As on the parade ground, the companies, with their commanders at their head, advanced in a fresh start. After a short time, despite the heavy barrage, we were able to report that the numerically far superior enemy

was retreating and that the crest had been taken. The attack faltered on the north and west slopes. The 1st Guards Regt. (Battalion Schauroth) had not been able to carry out the commanded forward echelon due to enemy counteraction. As a result, we had no contact on the right and were exposed to heavy enemy flanking fire. Correctly recognizing this situation, the French advanced at about 8.30 a.m. against Battalion Schauroth and our right wing counterattacked, but were flatly repulsed. With great tenacity the companies tried to gain ground by individual forward work, which was made more difficult by enemy machine gun counteraction, especially since the front line lay on the slope sloping towards the enemy [[successfully ***[556]*** tried

Tamkus's company had to contend with fierce resistance from the enemy, who lay particularly in and in front of the maze grove. With considerable casualties, they managed to work their way to a shallow path on the west slope of the ridge, where they dug in, facing west.

After our successful attack, the French closed the hollow at the [[KTK and the heights just west of Chamoit-Ferme for a long time with heavy calibre. No doubt his intention was to prevent fresh troops from being brought up for further attacks.

At 2 p.m. the attack should be resumed after 20 minutes of new artillery preparation. With our extraordinarily weak artillery fire there was no question of wearing down, let alone crushing, the enemy's resistance. The resistance nests in the maze prevented further action. Battalion Schauroth succeeded in working its way up to the northern edge of the crest, so that it was now level with us, but the extraordinarily weak forces made further advance impossible without significant artillery support.

After the information had come from the regiment that the Käseberg (to our right) was perfectly in our hands and the enemy was retreating to the Aisne, another attack was was announced for 6:00 p.m.

After renewed artillery preparation, Battalion Schauroth was to turn west over the [[Fürstenhöhe and thus give us some breathing space. We should swing west if the attack succeeded.

Since Franke's company was hardly an option as a combat force due to the heavy losses and all but one of its light machine guns had already been sent forward to reinforce Schütz's company, the battalion was given a platoon from Klapproth's company of the 4th Guards Regiment as a reserve, with two heavy machine guns and one light machine gun.

Insufficient artillery preparation did not bring the attack to development. Battalion Schauroth made no progress at all. Schütz's company tried to advance independently, but soon had to remain under enemy machine-gun fire and only returned to its original position with casualties.

The battalion had been fighting all day without being able to establish contact on the left flank. It was not until evening that the patrols of Tamkus's company succeeded in establishing contact with Regiment 411 south of the highway. As darkness fell, elements of Regiment 411, under

cover of our machine gun fire, closed the gap between the battalion's left wing and the main road. At last the connection was established on both sides. The day had brought good successes to the battalion, but also heavy casualties. The squad had done brilliantly. When I walked the front line after dark, there were connections everywhere and people were in a good, confident mood after the tiring day. By now the battalion had already lost a third of its combat strength.

Excited by the repeated attacks, the enemy briskly peppered the entire area with artillery. Since an enemy counterattack was expected on the 21st, the night was used to supply the companies with ammunition and hand grenades.

An attack ordered for 6:50 a.m. on the 22nd could not be developed due to too weak artillery preparation. A short time later, the strongest enemy barrage began, lasting almost an hour. With strong, far superior fresh troops, the French advanced at 7.20 a.m. to counterattack, which soon failed due to our well-aimed machine gun and infantry fire. The enemy because stranded with heavy casualties 100 m in front of Schütz's company and 30-50 m ***[557]*** in front of Tambus's company. Unfortunately, the proven commander of the 2nd Company, Lt. Tamkus, met a hero's death. In the Schütz company, Lt. Dahnel was wounded. The command of the 2nd Company was taken over by Lt. v. Werder. All day and the following night our position and rear area was under heavy fire.

On the 23rd, between 6 and 7 a.m., a heavy barrage began again. An enemy attack was expected. As a result of the small distance of our front line from the enemy, it could not be taken [under fire] by the artillery, so that our combat strength was only minimal. The following attack was again smoothly repelled. In front of Werder's company, the enemy had even retreated into the maze forest. The company immediately seized the opportunity to send out sentries.

The battalion had endured three difficult days of fighting, which had resulted in the loss of two-thirds of its men. Since the forces were too weak to continue to hold the position in the event of losses, it was relieved after dark by the battalion of the 4th Guards Regiment and withdrawn to the second line as a stand-by. The spirit had been brilliant among the people during those days. When the companies heard of the impending relief in the course of the afternoon, they asked to be allowed to hold the position until the regiment was completely withdrawn. In view of the low combat strengths, this wish could not be fulfilled.

From the 24th to the evening of the 26th the battalion remained on standby in the area west of Chamiot Ferme. Although the battalion was no longer directly responsible for defending the position, patrols from the company still reported to patrol the foreland.

One patrol from the Schütz's company in particular was able to bring back valuable information about the deployment of enemy machine guns.

The enemy fire increased to a barrage only early on the 24th, without the Frenchman venturing to make an attack. On the evening of the 26th, Regiment Eulenburg was [[mobilized by Res.-Inf.-Regt. 16 relieved.

The 2nd Foot Guards Regiment had strenuous but honorable days with this his last attack success of the world war behind him. The army report of October 24, 1918 reported only briefly: “East of Vouziers, parts of the 1st Guards-Inf.-Div. particularly outstanding under Graf zu Eulenburg.”

The regiment, which had borne the brunt of the last few days, will add this recognition of the Supreme Army Command as the last laurel leaf into the wreath of its victories with pride and at the same time with wistful memories.

- - - - -

Source: The Book of Honor of the Guard, pp. 554 - 557.

*****

[557]

Small, but - oho!

Small, but - oho! That was our brave commander of the Franzers, Major Otto.

A short, stout figure. Strong features, sparkling blue eyes, and a steely will. None of us ever saw him otherwise than armed with a small cutlass and a riding stick.

His favorite place to stay was the [[apron; the regimental headquarters was never more than a few hundred meters behind the front line.

“I always have to stay in front so that nothing happens to my guys.” And that’s how it really was. Wherever he went, his “guys” felt safe during his stay. Like him, the whole regiment lived with the belief that nothing could happen to him. ***[558]***

First a little episode from the Marne in 1918. In the push towards Epernay the regiment had taken the [[Trottewald on the day of the assault, reached the Marne around noon, and then advanced along its right bank. At the Echelle-Ferme, the regimental headquarters took up residence while the commander went to the front with an aide-de-camp.

The two of them were just lost in strategic considerations when—in the midst of the noise of the battle, they hear the typical sound of a shell coming straight at them.——*Sssssst*. The aide-de-camp throws himself to the ground, as prescribed.—Barely two meters in front of the commander, the 15-centimeter projectile sweeps into the dirt——seconds sneaking——the commander’s foot stops as he strides—seconds pass——then he turns to his aide-de-camp: “Yes, you see, if I hadn't been there, the [[carrion would have died!”

Weeks later we were in the hell of the Somme fighting. Before Ronssoy. Connection on the right to Augusta, on the left to a Saxon reserve infantry regiment whose number I have unfortunately forgotten. Two so-called battalions in the front, the third in reserve.

Tommy drums like crazy. Nothing can be heard but the barking of the guns, nothing to be seen from the front but a [[bar of smoke and smoke.

The telephones are buzzing in the regimental [[shelter. reports, inquiries. So far everything is fine. Order taker, messenger—and in between a short, squat figure. Hands clasped behind his back, “he” walks two meters back and forth. The riding stick jiggles nervously in his hand. But only the small canes. The man himself seems built of nerves, only rarely does a curt word come out of his tightened lips: “Have to wait—have to!” Not being able to go to his fellows, not being allowed to go to them so that nothing happens to them, that’s the man’s worst thing.

The buzzing of the receivers sounds less and less. One line after the other has been cut. Heavy casualties were reported from Augusta. What will happen? What will it be like in your own position? The commander takes the two steps forward and the two steps forward. The stick bangs on the table. “The damn wait!” There——

A machine gun rattles—dozens of others join in. Thank God! There’s still life! The major jumps out of the dugout. Just see, see! Flares rise from the cloud of smoke at the front. The guns behind us are spewing a barrage. But alas, the few guns!

The roar of the machine guns almost drowned out the rumbling and barking of the cannons. The monotonous mowing of the heavy ones mingles with the tapping of the light machine guns. The English barrage of fire comes nearer, leaps closer; but with undiminished strength the small arms work in front. But what is that—? In the neighboring sector on the right—— isn’t the fire getting weaker there——? Or is it a scam?

“Signals to the front!” The first word of the commander, who stands rooted to the spot and tries to penetrate the smoke with his glass. minutes pass. Firearms are raging. There, a look through the cloud of dust—a flashing lamp reports: “Foe near Augu..." Dust, smoke obscures the rest.

So yes! So it wasn’t a scam after all. “A runner to the reserve battalion!” A short order directs the reserve to cordon off Augusta’s regiment. Then two guns of the escort battery rattled past: a glow slid across the major's face: "Brave guys!"

A man panted over from the front, fell—pushed himself up again, stumbled on. —The Major is with him in a few sentences——“Report from 1st Battalion: Enemy has been repelled by Franz, in Augusta sector he has apparently broken through. In the neighboring sector on the left, fighting is going on in the front trench.”

“Lord, if only they can hold on! I have no more reserves.”

Another messenger brought the news forward that the right had already been cordoned off and that the neighbor on the left was to be given the best possible fire support.

The barrage of fire is long past us. The [[sealing off]] battalion has brought the enemy to a standstill here, but the front is shaking on the neighbor to the left. The commander's eyes flashed, the baton vibrated in his fist—just then a man from the escort battery, with a wounded arm, came in his way and was about to ride back. “Guy, give me that horse!” The next moment he galloped over trenches and [[funnels, over to the Saxons. But too late. everything goes back Tommy pressed on and prepared to thrust into the rear of our two battalions still holding out in the front trench.

Then our major dashed back, collected the regimental staff and a few returning stragglers and sets them—barely two dozen rifles and a light machine gun—to counterattack in the flank of the surrounding Tommy. He himself riding on horseback leading the way, with stick in hand. His fellows after with the edged weapon.

“Guys, forward, the good guys in front, let's get out!” Nobody thinks of taking cover when [[they mock the rain of bullets on horseback. The man with the machine gun under his arm fires as he walks forward.

The one still usable piece of artillery from our escort battery knocked out an English machine gun that was just being brought into position. The man with the riding stick may have appeared to Tommy as the devil incarnate. But also his guys. Like the devils they die and throw whatever gets in their way. The first Tommys go back——the next ones turn around.—

A group that has recognized their major breaks away from the front Franzer trench. Where he was, they had to be there too, and in a furious attack they too rolled up the English line in front of the Saxon sector.

The Saxons intervene—Tommy hurried to come back. On horseback in the midst of all the fighting was our main guy. His sharp voice and the riding stick ordered the Saxons and Franzers into a thorough counterattack as they advanced. The old positions had long since been regained and the pursuit battle was raging in advance.

In the rush to act, nobody noticed the major's sudden absence. Now one and the other notices it.

One worried about him. Someone claims to have seen him fall with his horse, so he got caught. The message goes from mouth to mouth. A mighty anger grabs the good Franzer people and they move forward faster. They want revenge for their beloved commander.

But he has long since been on the right wing of the regiment sector. Here the reserve battalion was struggling hard with the English, who had advanced to the Augusta’s third line.

The horse panted forward at a gallop, at that moment the man with the riding stick surveyed the situation and steered the exhausted animal to the two Franzer battalions, which always stood in their first position in front.

A [[polyphonic hurrah greeted the commander. "Lads, [[wa ck]] you got beaten — but now [[thierrananden bacon!"

A dozen sparkling eyes followed the bamboo stick that pointed to the lost “trench” in front of the Augusta’s sector. The horse was frightened by

the intensity with which the spurs are pushing him into the tracks, reared up and jumped off in the direction indicated. Five men—ten guys, a whole company climbs out of the trench and rushed after their major.——In the back of the invading Tommy.

Fifteen minutes later, the surrounded Englishman had surrendered and while the prisoners are being collected, the rest of the Augustans, who are still fit to fight, advanced again, went beyond the first line and advanced against the enemy positions. The two front battalions of the Franz Regiment also left their trenches. The whole front was in motion, and as the sun went down, two English trenches are in German hands.

The next day the army report [[reported on Major Otto and when he appeared two weeks later dressed in the “Pour le Mérite” in the [[resting quarters of his people, he dismissed all congratulations with the words: “Lads, I only wear the medal for you, the award is for you and not for me; [[denni ch tatjani ch ts!” ———

Werner Schröder†,
formerly of the Kaiser Franz Regiment.

- - - - -
from: The Book of Honor of the Guard (Part 2), pp. 557 – 559.

*****
[560]

Feldwebelleutnant Uhlendorf
from the 1st Guards Regiment z. F.
A war memoir by O. Lange, Halle ad S.

"Uhlendorf was a very excellent man... I would be happy if the excellent man, who actually was an exemplary representative of our old non-commissioned officer ranks, in the 'Honor Book of the Guard' a memorial would be erected.

for the crown prince's company as particularly good among all NCO students ***fall*** been selectedHe fully met the expectations placed on him from the first to the last day of his service. At that time I was a lieutenant in the Crown Prince's company and I can testify that Uhlendorf was one of the most capable non-commissioned officers there from the start. After Sergeant Wergin left, he became his successor as company sergeant.

He went to war as a deputy officer and platoon commander in the 2nd company. Here, too, he was always exemplary. In the autumn of 1915 he distinguished himself particularly well at Givenchy, where he took part as a platoon leader in the Werder heroic deed. In the Fresnières position he received the newly founded auxiliary pioneer company. It was his work and, under his leadership, served the regiment well until the end of the war.

Above all, one could be sure that people and non-commissioned officers who came from the H.P.I.K. were well educated.

On November 2, 1918, Uhlendorf reported to me at the regimental command post in Schlößchen Day on the Aisne on leave to return home. Some time later an officer who entered informed me that a fallen officer of the regiment was lying in front of the door. I went out and found Uhlendorf, who had been hit by a grenade as he was stepping out. We buried him on the same day in the castle courtyard.

I will keep him in grateful and honorable memory for the rest of my life."

Major a. DS Graf Eulenburg.

Who didn't know your name in the old, proud 1st Guards Regiment on foot!

Like a fata morgana, I see the "Hohkönigsburg", your former empire, far, far away in front of me, see gray figures at the edge of the forest torn apart by grenades, your field-gray faithful from the H. Pi. K.! Like ghosts, like shadows, they scurry between the trees, gray in gray! A gentle evening wind caresses the treetops, which bow respectfully in front of you in mysterious murmurs and spaces.

Yes, there you were a king, an unrestrained and strict, implacable ruler! Whether we dug in the calm of the battle, whether tunnels or barbed wire were dragged, whether we were relieved, whenever our path led through your kingdom, it sounded in us as a warning and admonition at the same time; Uhlendorf, Uhlendorf! Then the tired body tensed, and our steps became quicker, the work more industrious. Everyone feared you and your anger!—And yet we loved you, loved you with the full, simple heart of a soldier! Many may not have been aware of this love, with many it may not have dared to express itself in excessive feelings of respect! But we all had an infinite sense of esteem for you. Everyone saw in you a model of the German soldier who only knew two things: Fatherland and duty, fulfillment of duty to the last breath! How the ear listened when your dashing tone of command, like a rifle shot, lashed across the quiet morning to us, to the deepest shelters of Fresnières! Didn't it just flash through our heads: "Uhlendorf is coming! Didn't you miss anything?" And only when this short brain revision showed no shortcomings did the front change to the wall, and we continued dreaming of peace, vacation and home.

And when a couple of high-spirited journeymen let the fully loaded wagons of the field railway rush down with a thunderous roar, against the scanty remains of that shattered barn of Fresnières, how [562] you drove ***between*** them with lightning speed to challenge the wicked, who in your opinion reckless, to the enemy's fire seemed to grasp. But this had mostly already been swallowed up by the merciful darkness of the night! Your anger poured into emptiness. But

once our Uhlendorf had to give in! That was later, much later, when we still hoped for a final triumph in the new, merry war of movement. And it was like this:

The company had made a rich booty of food. There was a beautiful red and white milk cow. All these glories were entrusted to my care by the company commander. The company tailor, Fusilier Schulze, led the cow. How the old warrior hearts looked forward to the future good life! With what deep reverence everyone stood around the animal when it was treated for the first time by a skilled hand, almost exceeding all expectations with a fine, singing beam. —

But this joy was not to be of lasting duration. Very soon one of those foreign requisition artists had managed with magical skill to make the pride of the whole company, our carefully tended cow, disappear without a trace under our own eyes. All searches and suspicions of foreign troops were in vain. —

But luck came to us again — in the form of a free-roaming cow. It was hard to believe! There, in that paddock, she walked gravely. No minder was around. — Does anyone hear her? - But war justifies the means, so away with all petty scruples! Were we asked for permission when our cow was kidnapped? Here it was important to act quickly and decisively!

The company tailor was instructed to lasso the cow. He climbed over the fence as the cow rushed wildly through the paddock at full speed. With her head bowed, she darted at the brave little tailor, who hurriedly fled behind the protective fence. From the gleeful, resounding laughter of the field grays standing around, it was clear that they, too, had already tried and lost the unequal fight. The animal had apparently become shy and wild as a result of the previous acts of war. But one thing was certain: the cows were ownerless!

It was now a matter of getting hold of them under all circumstances, since we would then be relieved of all future inconveniences. She had to be attacked energetically and ruthlessly. The whole battle line, cook, shoemaker, tailor and driver, were deployed. Everyone knew what was important.

The fierce battle raged on for about an hour on ***both*** fronts. Now the Fusiliers advanced, now they retreated in haste behind the fence. Finally, however, after both opponents had been fought almost to the point of complete exhaustion, they succeeded in throwing the lasso and taming the cow. Since she was very weak, she resigned herself to her fate.

She was again entrusted to the good Schulze, who now also promised to vouch for her possession. It was a fine, strong animal, closely resembling, fortunately, its predecessor in colour. With a light heart we made our way.

But with the returning strength, our cow's urge for freedom also increased. She wanted to go her own way and was very reluctant to follow friendly persuasion or brute force. Suddenly she stopped altogether and couldn't be moved. When she received a strong blow from the whip, she suddenly shot away like a hawk with her leader, who was holding on tightly.

So it happened that both arrived safely at the quarters an hour before us. The company greeted her with a loud hello. No bystander suspected anything of the involuntary change of ownership and the hardships endured. And we knowers guarded our tongues. The veil of deepest mystery fell over what had happened and was never lifted. —

But the next morning the cow gave no milk! All persuasion was in vain, the bucket pushed underneath remained empty. Even experts, including a qualified farmer, were unable to solve the puzzle.

The animal was eventually slaughtered. Our Feldwebelleutnant Uhlendorf never found out how things were connected. —

He met the deadly lead while faithfully fulfilling his duty!

Not native earth covers his body. Far from home, far from his loved ones, we dug his grave. —

Old, long-buried memories are awakened! Old, beloved comrades, who once were, rise from their graves and stand before us, lost in time, dimly!

The memory? — What once was is almost like a dream! Life demands its rights!

Far, far to the west, on a sunny mountain slope under rustling trees, lies a lonely grave. The warm French sun caresses the hill. A plain cross of wood, weathered by storm and rain, gives us the name of a brave, dutiful German soldier. Perhaps the name has already been erased. —

But the evening wind plays softly in the treetops and they mysteriously rustle and whisper his name:

Uhlendorf.

- - - - -

from: The Book of Honor of the Guard (Part 2), pp. 560 - 563.

[564]

Lieutenant Fink as leader of the 1st Battery of the 3rd Guards Reserve Field Art. Regt.

From vice sergeant d. R. Grimm

No member of the 1st battery will forget the short time in which Lt. Fink led them.

In Vireux, where the 1st Battery From January 29, 1918 to March 9, 1918, the new, young battery commander, who led the battery on behalf of its unforgettable battery chief, Hptm. Brandt, won the hearts of everyone battery member because of his fresh nature, which had to sweep everyone away, and which made us gladly take part in the training service, which had

become unfamiliar due to our long life at the front. His cheerfulness, which no amount of service or exertion could suffocate, the right tone he always found towards everyone, did not fail him even at the front, even in the deepest mess. Lt. Fink led the 1st Battery also in the "Great Battle" of France, which should show that the special training of the past weeks had not been in vain. Capt. Brandt commanded in this battle for the sick Capt. d. R. Stackebrandt the I. Division. That's how it was Lt. Fink was granted the privilege of leading the battle-hardened 1st Battalion, which on March 20 in front of St. Quentin was the only battery of the regiment to be advanced in open country to the infantry position, leading it to victory. And it seemed to us as if the laughing youth of the battery commander is a talisman for us.

Already at dawn on March 19, when our troops from the Steuerwald camp advanced in single squads to St. Quentin to find shelter in the basement of a shelled-up house in which the heavy shells of the Austrian motorized mortars were piled high, they escaped bombardment of the city with heavy artillery and gas shells at night, since they were warned of the gas in good time, and a direct hit by the heavy artillery frightened us with its impact directly in front of our basement window, but the house itself with its eerie warehouse was hit was spared. Many members of other formations were not awake in the cellars that night and were poisoned by gas. In the same way, one house after another was blown up with the heavy Austrian ammunition, accompanied by eerie detonations. All hell broke loose in St. Quentin that night.

When the battery moved into the firing position on the evening of March 20th, we were lucky enough to be able to ***[565]*** gallop through a crossroadsA few minutes earlier an ambulance had been left there by a direct hit, and as always it was particularly difficult to get our teams past the dead horses.

At 4:40 a.m. on March 21, the 2,400 guns deployed were to suddenly open fire. We awaited in understandable excitement with tension that could hardly be suppressed with Lt. Fink in the tunnels of the infantry, behind whose trenches our guns were open, the advance of the clock hand. At 1.00 a.m. the English made an advance, vigorously supported by artillery, to bring in prisoners. They actually took twelve prisoners, two of whom were rogues who betrayed the imminent German offensive, but GHQ had left the infantry believing until the last moment that it would not start until March 22nd, leaving the English unable to avert the disaster could. The English fire raid lasted about two hours and was right in our battery position. If this gunfire didn't stop, none of us would get to the guns alive. But at 3:00 a.m. it was quiet again.

From the moment the first grenades hit the barrels of the 1st Battery left, no more shots went into our position. The sight of the raid in the dark of night on flashing launchers was unheard of. The deafening noise of the largest artillery battle the world had ever seen quickly deafened the individual. After five hours of drumming, the barrage of fire began. At around 11:00 a.m. we were to fire the last shot at the furthest possible

distance. But the cease-fire order never came. Had the attack failed? Could anyone still live over there? Thirst tormented us, our throats were parched. Because of the fog and gun smoke that lay over the battlefield, the secondary gun 5m away could no longer be seen. At about 2:00 a.m. the haze finally began to lift, and we saw column after column moving across the German infantry trenches, blurred in the fog, horsemen and infantry, everyone was marching forward. Anyone who was allowed to experience this after years of trench warfare will never forget the blissful feeling of victory that we felt at that hour. After ten hours of continuous shooting, including hours with a gas mask, there was a cease-fire!

We remained in our position until the next day, and then marched through St. Quentin, still under heavy fire, to the former English infantry barred position, where we bowed among the dead English.

The following day we came into contact with the English again near Villers and during the night of March 23rd and 24th fired 200 rounds per gun.

On Sunday, March 24th, the 1st Battery about Ham ahead. Everyone rushed for supplies in town and Lt. Fink had trouble regrouping his men and had to gallop into position with the battery. A few ammunition wagons had been loaded with crates full of raw eggs, which spilled lovely over everything as they swung across a ditch! On that day, when the Somme was crossed, I was assigned to the ***[566]*** infantry to transmit liaison orders by bicycle, and there I had the opportunity to admire the superior calm of Captain Brandt, who was also far in front. When I returned to the battery in the evening, which had taken up position on a railroad embankment, only Lt. Fink and San.-Utffz. Hollmann on his feet. Lt. Link only allowed himself the first thing of the day, while many others unfortunately had enough of the good things by midday. We happily drank a bottle of Rotspohn and champagne together, only Fink refused to follow my example and drink condensed milk as well. But we had also conquered many preserves, jams, biscuits, etc., which we enjoyed. The English shells bursting dangerously close did not worry us that night.

We were held up on this railway embankment for two days until we finally went on in the night of March 26th and 27th. For hours we had to wait on the highway until daylight before we could advance. During the day Lt. During a stay in a village, on the advice of sergeant Bohlens, Fink was ordered to throw down in a garden outside the village. This measure was soon to prove correct, since the batteries holding in the village suffered very heavy losses of men and horses a few minutes later from a bomb attack by an enemy aircraft squadron. Only the 2nd Battery had more than 40 dead horses, so that we had to give her some of our horses and now also suffered from a tight harness.

During the night we marched very laboriously across the old Somme battlefields of 1916. The following day, Good Friday, brought the last major advance of the dying battle, and we, as a relatively fresh force, were deployed first. In the early evening we took up position in front of

Montdidier under shell fire in the pouring rain in the sodden clay field. The outer point of the advance had been reached. Nobody could stretch their dead tired limbs to rest in this field. There was Lt. Fink, who always had a compassionate heart for his people, permission to spend the night in a village 1-2 km to the right. Only one post remained at the guns to fire barrage if necessary. We spent the night in the village on a dry hayloft. A fallen tallow candle (which was lit, of course), a shrapnel hit (the village was on fire all night)—the hay would have caught fire and the leaden-sleeping crews would all have been burned. Our star protected us. Lt. The next day Fink felt like the rider over Lake Constance, his responsibility had been so great. The day after that there were no more houses in the village. We had spent the last night in the dying unscathed.

The next morning it turned out that we had caught up too far and had to pull back 2-3 km. About 1 km from a large farm we took up an open firing position and held out there for another week. Lt. Fink and *Feldw.-Lt.* Bock lived proudly in a conquered English pointed tent. Night after night the English shells whistled melodiously over us into the Ferme, the meeting point for the detached infantry, who had suffered heavy losses there and, instead of the peace they had hoped for, died—25 men in one night alone. We watched numerous air battles during the day with interest, once six were shot down in a few minutes, but we didn't know whether they were ours or enemy's. A heavy air raid aimed at us instead hit a group of infantrymen behind our position; it was a desolate day.

When the 1st Battery was pulled out seventeen days after its deployment, Lt. [[Report to Fink that his battery had lost neither a man nor a horse! The only formation of 231st Inf.-Div. that remained undamaged, even the Div.-Staff in Roye had lost two General Staff officers.

In early May, Lt. Fink then took the lead in the 9th Battr., and luck ran out with him in the 1st Battery and him. The 1st Battery after the storming of the Chemin des Dames until the armistice, ***[567]*** lost almost all of their old relatives, including their revered battery commander, Hptm. Brandt.

But on June 3, 1918, Lt. Fink was killed by an aerial bomb while commanding the 9th Battery and buried in the Trugny manor garden. A cruel fate brought a hopeful life to an end so early. He will not be forgotten by anyone who knew him, and we are left with Menander's words of comfort:

"Whom the gods love dies young."

- - - - -

source: *Das Ehrenbuch der Garde*, pp. 564-567.